

Appendix A

This appendix contains the *National Community Services Data Dictionary* (NCSDD) Version 3 metadata definition for Indigenous status. This is the national standard for the storage and transmission/reporting of Indigenous data, and it includes the recommended question for the collection of Indigenous status.

Indigenous status

Identifying and definitional attributes

Knowledgebase ID: 2009

Version No: 5

Metadata type: Data Element

Definition: Indigenous status is a measure of whether a person identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. This is in accord with the first two of three components of the Commonwealth definition. See Comments for the Commonwealth definition.

Context: Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occupy a unique place in Australian society and culture. In the current climate of reconciliation, accurate and consistent statistics about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are needed in order to plan, promote and deliver essential services, to monitor changes in wellbeing and to account for government expenditure in this area. The purpose of this data element is to provide information about people who identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. Agencies or establishments wishing to determine the eligibility of individuals for particular benefits, services or rights will need to make their own judgements about the suitability of the standard measure for these purposes, having regard to the specific eligibility criteria for the program concerned.

Representational attributes

Datatype: Numeric

Representational form: Code *Field size (minimum):* 1

Representational layout: N *Field size (maximum):* 1

Data domain:

1	Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander origin
2	Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal origin
3	Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin
4	Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander origin
9	Not stated/inadequately described

Guide for use: This data element is based on the ABS Standard for Indigenous status. For detailed advice on its use and application please refer to the ABS website as indicated below under source document.

The classification for 'Indigenous Status' has a hierarchical structure comprising two levels. There are four categories at the detailed level of the classification which are grouped into two categories at the broad level. There is one supplementary category for 'not stated' responses. The classification is as follows:

Indigenous:

- Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander origin
- Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal origin
- Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin

Non-Indigenous:

- Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander origin

Not stated/ inadequately described:

This category is not to be available as a valid answer to the questions but is intended for use:

- primarily when importing data from other data collections that do not contain mappable data;
- where an answer was refused;
- where the question was not able to be asked prior to completion of assistance because the client was unable to communicate or a person who knows the client was not available.

Only in the last two situations may the tick boxes on the questionnaire be left blank.

Verification rules:

Collection methods:

The standard question for Indigenous status is as follows:

[Are you] [Is the person] [Is (name)] of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

(For persons of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, mark both 'Yes' boxes.)

No.....

Yes, Aboriginal.....

Yes, Torres Strait Islander.....

This question is recommended for self-enumerated or interview-based collections. It can also be used in circumstances where a close relative, friend, or another member of the household is answering on behalf of the subject.

When someone is not present, the person answering for them should be in a position to do so, i.e. this person must know the person about whom the question is being asked well and feel confident to provide accurate information about them. However, it is strongly recommended that this question be asked directly wherever possible.

This question must always be asked regardless of data collectors' perceptions based on appearance or other factors.

The Indigenous status question allows for more than one response. The procedure for coding multiple responses is as follows:

If the respondent marks 'No' and either 'Aboriginal' or 'Torres Strait Islander', then the response should be coded to either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander as indicated (i.e. disregard the 'No' response).

If the respondent marks both the 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' boxes, then their response should be coded to 'Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin'.

If the respondent marks all three boxes ('No', 'Aboriginal and 'Torres Strait Islander'), then the response should be coded to 'Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin' (i.e. disregard the 'No' response).

This approach may be problematical in some data collections, for example when data are collected by interview or using screen-based data capture systems. An additional response category

Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.....

may be included if this better suits the data collection practices of the agency or establishment concerned.

Relational attributes

Related metadata:

NCSDD and NHDD:

NCSDD: supersedes the data element Indigenous status version 2

NHDD: supersedes the data element Indigenous status version 4

Information Model link:

NCSIM: Party characteristic/Person characteristic/socio-cultural characteristic

NHIM: Party characteristic/Person characteristic/social characteristic

Administrative attributes

Registration authority: National Community Services Information Management Group and National Health Information Management Group

Admin. status: Current **Effective date:** Date of reg. auth. endorsement

Source document: Available on the ABS website. From the ABS site (www.abs.gov.au) select: About Statistics/About Statistical Collections (Concepts & Classifications) /Other ABS Statistical Standards/Standards for Social Labour and Demographic Variables/Cultural Diversity Variables/Indigenous Status.

Source organisation: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Comments: This metadata item is common to both the *National Community Services Data Dictionary* and the *National Health Data Dictionary*.

The following definition, commonly known as 'The Commonwealth Definition' was given in a High Court judgement in the case of *Commonwealth v Tasmania* (1983) 46 ALR 625.

'An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives'.

There are three components to the Commonwealth definition:

- descent;
- self-identification; and
- community acceptance.

In practice, it is not feasible to collect information on the community acceptance part of this definition in general purpose statistical and administrative collections and therefore standard questions on Indigenous Status relate to descent and self-identification only.

References

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Welfare Information Unit (ATSHWIU) 1997. Indigenous identification in administrative data collections – best practice and quality assurance. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

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Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2003. Residential aged care in Australia 2001–02: a statistical overview. Canberra: AIHW.